

THE DOSSIER OF WOLF LADEJINSKY

The Fair Rewards of Distinguished Civil Service

JAMES RORTY

LAST November Wolf Ladejinsky, then agricultural attaché of the American Embassy in Tokyo, flew home to participate in trade conferences with the Japanese economic mission which was at that time in Washington. Ladejinsky was famous throughout Asia as the prime architect of the land reform program which, beyond any other measure instituted by the American occupation, had prevented Communist capture of the Japanese countryside. After the conferences, Ladejinsky remained in Washington awaiting his expected transfer from the State Department to the Department of Agriculture, under the new law that puts agricultural attachés under the latter's jurisdiction. His reappointment, he had been assured, was pending; meanwhile the Department of Agriculture, with which he had a record of nineteen years of unblemished service, was reimbursing the State Department for his \$11,000 a year salary.

It was not until early in December that the grapevine warned Ladejinsky something was wrong. Then, on December 15, he was

WHEN the Department of Agriculture, headed by Utah's Ezra Benson, refused to give security clearance to Wolf Ladejinsky, architect of the Japanese land reform instituted by the American occupation, the spotlight was cast on a number of problems that have long made Americans uneasy. How well were the Eisenhower-initiated security measures operating in the various Washington departments? How effectively were certain departments, like Agriculture, fulfilling their functions in general, domestic and foreign, under their new political heads? JAMES RORTY is the veteran journalist whose work appears so frequently in this magazine. He has written numerous books on advertising, medicine, food and politics, and also several volumes of verse. Born in Middletown, New York, in 1890, he now lives on several acres of farmland in Flatbrookville, New Jersey.

summoned to the office of Assistant Secretary Earl Butz. After an embarrassed preliminary to the effect that he had found in Ladejinsky's record nothing but what merited praise, Mr. Butz said that Secretary Benson had decided not to reappoint him to his Tokyo post; in the Secretary's judgment he lacked the American farm background required to represent American agriculture abroad, and being foreign born he could not interpret the American way of life to the peoples of Asia.

During the next few days the case of Wolf Ladejinsky fumed and smoldered like a trailing fuse, spreading dismay and indignation through the long corridors and multitudinous cubicles of the permanent staff of the Department of Agriculture.

When Clark Mollenhoff broke the story in the December 19, 1954 issue of the *Des Moines Register* it made first-page news not only from coast to coast but around the world. In the Far East, where Ladejinsky's anti-Communist services were well known, shocked headlines blazed from Tokyo to New Delhi. As James A. Michener wrote later in a letter to the *New York Times*, it was "as if Richard Nixon and Adlai Stevenson were to be charged with subversion."

Ladejinsky first learned that there were also security charges against him from the early news stories. At his interview with Assistant Secretary Butz nothing had been said about security. Now it appeared that "former Communists" had testified that Ladejinsky's employment for a year, in 1931, by the Amtorg Trading Corporation had "required clearance by the Communist party." This and other security reasons, read the statement, including the fact that Ladejinsky had three sisters in Russia, "preclude the department . . . from granting [him] the necessary security clearance."

REPERCUSSIONS were immediate. Newspaper commentators pointed out that Ladejinsky had been cleared as recently as the preceding May under the revised criteria of the Eisenhower security program. Representative Walter Judd of Minnesota, an expert on Far Eastern affairs, sprang to his defense, declaring that in his opinion Ladejinsky was "the man who had done more than any other to combat Communism in Asia." Mr. Judd announced that he was scheduled to meet with Secretary Benson to urge reconsideration of the decision. From Tokyo the correspondent of the *New York Times* cabled that both Japanese and Americans were amazed and outraged at the decision not to re-employ Ladejinsky, and that he could find no informed person who knew any reason to justify Secretary Benson's action. Ambassador John M. Allison issued a statement in praise of Ladejinsky, emphasizing that the Japanese Communists had often attacked him; he warned that the Ladejinsky affair was damaging the prestige of the United States in the Orient.

At this point Scott MacLeod, the State Department's security chief, entered the controversy to correct an earlier statement by Milan D. Smith, executive assistant to Secretary Benson, that he had concurred in Agriculture's decision that Ladejinsky was a security risk. Mr. MacLeod declared he had done nothing of the sort. Mr. Smith was also mistaken, he said, in stating that the State Department had never reevaluated Ladejinsky's security file on the basis of the new Eisenhower criteria.

"I took my crack at the Ladejinsky case last April," said Mr. MacLeod, adding he hadn't been excited by the fact that Ladejinsky was Russian-born and had sisters still living in Russia, or that he had worked in 1931 for Amtorg. All this had been more than balanced by the evidence, he said, of Ladejinsky's land reform work having impeded Communism in the Far East.

"We don't have any partly pregnant employees," concluded MacLeod. Ladejinsky had been completely cleared, otherwise he wouldn't be on State's pay roll.

MacLeod's statement revealed a gaping flaw in the Eisenhower security program: the lack of an interdepartmental appeal arrangement to settle security cases on which different departments had reached different conclusions. At the same time it challenged the competence of Agriculture's security personnel. The Department's young security officer, John G. Cassity, had been appointed only a few weeks before; his preparation for his job consisted of two years' experience as vice consul in Stuttgart screening Displaced Persons. "Those anti-Communist articles," said Mr. Cassity, referring to articles by Ladejinsky on Japanese land reform which had been published in the *Saturday Evening Post*, the *Country Gentleman*, and the *Saturday Review* "would have been enough to bother me when you consider that this man had relatives in Russia." In other words, Ladejinsky could have written them as a permitted "cover"—a theory deriving apparently from Senator McCarthy, who once suggested that James Wechsler had conducted his anti-Communist activities under direction of the party.

If Secretary Benson disagreed with this theory, he gave no sign. Instead, he permitted Mr. Cassity's chief, Milan D. Smith, to give an even more extraordinary press interview. Smarting from the lash of the MacLeod statement, Smith told press interviewers that he would now prove "how right we were" in refusing to clear Ladejinsky. He made public an 8-page letter received on December 23 from George M. Vitt, a White Russian, then editor of the *American Exporter*. Mr. Vitt wrote he was not a Jew-baiter, since "some of my best friends are Jews," but—it was regrettable that there was "a goodly share of Russian Jews" among Russian revolutionaries who had come to this country for political asylum during the past half century or more. Moreover, "from my own experience with Amtorg, especially in their early days . . . their own interpreters were among the key-important people . . . [whose] reliability had to be 100 per cent certain." Vitt added that in his opinion "no former Russian who is to boot 'a disliker of

Communism' and who has professed himself to be one in published articles . . . could possibly go and have himself a nice trip to Moscow to chin with his sisters and father. . . ."

BY THIS time the Ladejinsky imbroglio had reached the White House, where it was creasing the brows of the President's top policy advisers. On December 24 it had been announced, after a conference between Benson and the President, that Mr. Eisenhower would back his Secretary of Agriculture. But how could he do so and at the same time back both the State Department and the long-suffering Harold Stassen, chief of the Foreign Operations Administration, who had obviously been elected to pull the administration's chestnuts out of the fire? Six months before, FOA had vainly asked Secretary Benson to release Ladejinsky so that it might hire him to direct an emergency land reform program in Vietnam. Now, after Secretary Benson's conference with the President, Mr. Stassen announced that, although Ladejinsky had made a significant contribution in Japan and the Far East generally, he could not offer him the job for which he had sought him six months earlier until the security issue was resolved.

On January 5, after one of the speediest security reviews on record, it was resolved. FOA announced "the appointment of Wolf Ladejinsky to work in the field of his special-

ty with assignment immediately to assist in the program of land reform in Vietnam." Mr. Stassen stated that Secretary Benson "had expressed satisfaction that this opportunity for employment in FOA will probably make good use of his [Ladejinsky's] special qualifications."

Meanwhile, however, Secretary Benson continued to mutter that he still thought he was right to avoid every temptation to say a good word about Ladejinsky, and to give press interviews in which he sometimes surpassed even the fatuousness of his aides. "I don't know much about land reform policy in Asia," he is reported as saying. "Nor about what Ladejinsky did in Japan. But I would not want to see such a program in this country."

It was not at all surprising, therefore, that at the January 12 White House press conference, the Ladejinsky affair was dumped squarely in the President's lap; whereupon Mr. Eisenhower proceeded to juggle it until his best friends blushed for him.

The President said that Secretary Benson had read him a summary of the case, but that he hadn't studied it. At one point he remarked that the Secretary's summary "would have scared him" . . . though he hadn't studied the other side of the question, and hadn't realized that this man had "written an anti-Communist book." At another point he hazarded the notion that "Vietnam was not so sensitive that he [Ladejinsky] could damage the United States"—as much presumably as he could damage the United States in his old post in Japan.

Thus, as Walter Lippman pointed out, "though Mr. Ladejinsky had been formally cleared for the job in Vietnam, the President's remarks about him denied him a moral clearance and left him under a cloud of suspicion." That cloud was still undisputed three weeks later at the February 2 press conference, by which time Ladejinsky was on his way to Vietnam, when in answer to a question by Clark Mollenhoff the President, referring to the differing views of Secretary Benson and Mr. Stassen, said that "each of them had followed their best judgment,

*The release of this letter, and Vitt's subsequent statement that Mr. Smith had telephoned him from Washington to congratulate him on "the most intelligent letter he had received on the Ladejinsky case," brought vigorous protests from Jewish agencies. On New Year's Day Irving M. Engel, president of the American Jewish Committee, telegraphed Secretary Benson urging his prompt disavowal of the "deplorable characterizations" contained in the Vitt communication. Secretary Benson replied that the Vitt letter did not reflect the view of the Department. Subsequently at a conference with representatives of the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League, Secretary Benson frankly confessed that the action of his executive assistant in releasing the Vitt letter was a mistake, adding that the Department had not previously known that Ladejinsky was a Jew.

and the man had been rehired and it was a *fait accompli*." At the March 16 press conference the President still would not state forthrightly that an injustice had been done, merely saying that "the particular [Ladejinsky] case was still under investigation, and a final report had not been made."

Thus ended the first round of the Ladejinsky affair, to be resumed by the Senate Committee on the Post Office and the Civil Service, which has promised a full investigation of the case, and probably by other committees concerned with the security system.

THROUGH all the welter of newspaper publicity the figure of Wolf Ladejinsky as a person remained obscure. About all the American public could gather was that he was a Russian Jewish immigrant who had become an outstanding land expert, not by farming but by cultivating the academic vineyards of Columbia University and then doing a prodigious amount of field work in half the countries of Asia. Ladejinsky himself would as soon let it go at that. He is a friendly and charming person, but when you ask him about himself he is puzzled and mildly annoyed, because he has just finished telling you about his government career and his writings, all of which are in the records anyway.

Two days before he left for Indo-China, I interviewed Ladejinsky in the over-age walkup apartment that he occupies, while in Washington, with two other bachelors. Except for the books taking up most of the wall space and a notable record collection, the place was monastic-looking, with a characteristic bachelor untidiness. One of Wolf's roommates washed his socks in the bathroom washbowl while the other broiled a steak and answered the continually ringing telephone.

Ladejinsky is now fifty-six and looks somewhat less. He is of medium height, ruggedly built, with black hair beginning to turn gray. The face is dark, mobile, heavily lined, the eyes startlingly blue—he looks rather like an American Indian. Secretary Benson to the contrary, there is nothing very "foreign" about Ladejinsky except his name.

Wolf Isaac Ladejinsky was born March 15, 1899, in the Ukrainian town of Ekaterinopol, in Russia. His father was a successful miller and trader in grain and lumber. They occupied a comfortable home outside the town, close to the peasants and forest workers with whom his father dealt. Wolf worked in his father's flour mill while a schoolboy in Ekaterinopol; during his teens he attended the Gymnasium in the nearby town of Zvengorodka, where he got the equivalent of a junior college degree in this country. He would have continued his education at a university but for the 1917 revolution, which brought disaster to the family.

Wolf's father, who could remember an earlier period of terror during the 1905 revolution, now saw his mill and other property confiscated and his household impoverished. Ekaterinopol changed hands several times as Communists, Whites, and Ukrainian Nationalists took it and lost it. Pogroms broke out in neighboring villages and Wolf, then a youth of eighteen, saw dozens of people murdered by mobs whose leaders shouted that all Jews were Communists.

By 1920 the Soviet power was established in the Ukraine. Wolf's brother had been killed during the civil war. His three sisters felt they must stay with their aging parent, but that it was for Wolf, as the only boy in the family, to escape if he could. He remembers that it took him thirty days, afoot and riding in the horse carts of peasants, to reach the Dniester, and that it took all his remaining money to pay the group that signaled him when to run for his life across the frozen river.

In Bessarabia, then Rumanian territory, Wolf got a job in a flour mill and saved enough in six months to get to Kishenev, the capital of the province. There, by trading in firewood, he made enough money to get to Bucharest, where he became a baker's apprentice. Later, the Bucharest office of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society gave him a white-collar job. "Go west, young man," advised a kindly HIAS official—it was years later that Wolf realized his friend had been quoting Horace Greeley. His boat sailed

from the Rumanian port of Galatz and berthed in Hoboken, N.J. He landed broke, and got his first job in a shirt factory. From this he graduated to buttonhole-making, mattress-making, shoemaking, and then to a newspaper route.

WITHIN five years after he left Rumania Wolf felt that he knew enough English to put his feet back on the educational ladder that the Bolshevik Revolution had pulled from under him. Columbia gave him a two-year credit, based on his Gymnasium diploma. As for the tuition: "That newspaper stand at 50th and Sixth Avenue, where Radio Center is now, was a popular stand. And during the quiet hours I could read what they called the 'quality' magazines, like *World's Work* and *Century*. I cleared around \$15 a week and, given the relative cheapness of living in those days, I could save just enough to put myself through Columbia."

Wolf got his B.S. degree in two years, was graduated in the class of 1928, and naturalized the same year. He was on his way toward a master's degree in economics when, in 1930, Amtorg offered him a job as an interpreter at \$40 a week—nearly three times what he was then making. It was strictly an interpreter's job, he says, involving no political clearance. The depression was on and scores of White Russians were being similarly employed by Amtorg. (Nearly a quarter of a century later, the security officer of the Department of Agriculture was to inflate Ladejinsky's Amtorg job into that of "economist, investigator, and assistant to the chief of the bureau of transportation.") When Wolf was fired within a year without explanation, he went back to selling newspapers. Meanwhile, he continued taking courses at Columbia with the hope of getting a doctorate in economics. (He had obtained his master's degree from Columbia in 1932.) Wolf never did get his Ph.D., although in 1934 he finished a comprehensive study of the Soviet state farms which he had hoped might be the basis for a thesis.

The study was entitled "Soviet State

Farms" and was published in 1938 in two successive issues of the *Political Science Quarterly*. This was Wolf's first published writing in English and the first treatment in English of the Soviet state farms. It made his professional reputation, and remains today an important item in the literature of the subject. The study describes the repeated failure of the Soviet state farms and the disastrous consequences of substituting primitive bureaucratic Marxism for scientific agriculture; it could not have pleased the Soviet authorities, to put it mildly.

Why, then, was Ladejinsky able to get a visa to enter Russia in 1939 after being turned down repeatedly during the previous two years? Ladejinsky says he doesn't know, but wishes he did, because, "If I knew the workings of the Russian bureaucratic mind I could be of a great deal more help to this country than I have been."

IN 1935 Wolf had applied for and got a job in the Foreign Agricultural Relations Division of the United States Department of Agriculture, starting at the bottom at \$2,000 a year. He was assigned first to studies of Russian agriculture, later of Far Eastern agriculture. When in 1939 he got a visa to enter Russia he went there with the knowledge and approval of his superiors. His purpose was dual; he wanted to learn more about Soviet agriculture, and to see his sisters. (His father had meanwhile died.) During his ten-week stay in Russia, Ladejinsky made periodic reports to the United States Embassy officials in Moscow. He left after the Embassy informed him that war was imminent in Europe and he risked being held in Russia by the Soviet authorities because of his Russian birth.

In 1939 Ladejinsky published his second major study. It was entitled "Japan's Agricultural Crisis" and appeared in the *Journal of Farm Economics*. Practically all the reforms that Ladejinsky, with the backing of his superiors in SCAP, was subsequently able to carry out in Japan are envisaged in this lucid and comprehensive analysis, which still warrants reading.

DURING the war: Ladejinsky did special studies of Japanese agriculture and lectured at the military and civil affairs schools that had been established at Harvard, Yale, the University of Chicago, and elsewhere to train officers destined for jobs with the occupying authorities. Shortly after V-J Day he was loaned to MacArthur, and arrived in Japan late in 1945.

"We traveled all over Japan," says Ladejinsky. "We walked on the land and we talked to the people—the peasants as well as the landlords, the money-lenders, and the Japanese agricultural experts. Many of the latter had been struggling for years with the chronic crisis of Japanese agriculture, but had been kept from accomplishing any significant reforms by the entrenched opposition of the Japanese landlord class."

The American occupation made it possible, for the first time, to overrule this opposition. By 1947 the Japanese peasants were beginning to enjoy the first fruits of the land reforms which they had been demanding, not always patiently, for over a century. When SCAP took over, 70 per cent of Japanese farm families were tenants, paying rent to their landlords in the form of half or more of their annual yield. Fifty per cent of these tenants were renting less than 1.2 acres, and another 27 per cent an average of 1.7 acres each. In addition to paying 50 per cent of his yields to the landlord, the tenant had to supply his own housing, tools, fertilizer, and seed. Competition for land kept both land values and rental rates far higher than the productivity of the soil would justify.

What enabled the Japanese landlords to resist successfully the repeated legislative efforts to improve the lot of the peasantry was their sheer numbers and their strategic position in the Japanese village. Although there were large landowners in Japan—3 per cent of the farm-owners held 30 per cent of the cultivated land—the vast majority of landlords, numbering several thousand, collected rent from small parcels of land, often less than an acre. In every village they held the dominant power; and the long history

of agrarian unrest had welded them together into a chief support of the reactionary, militaristic parties of Japan. Describing this situation in the first article he published after the adoption of the agrarian reform law, Ladejinsky wrote: "Their [the landlords'] importance as a bulwark against Japan's social and political reorientation, as prescribed in the Potsdam declaration, was lost neither on thoughtful Japanese nor on the American occupation authorities. It was, therefore, as much from a recognition of the close relationship between the anti-democratic tradition of Japan and the rural landlord system, as from an interest in the tenant farmer's welfare, that a redistribution of land ownership became occupation policy. General MacArthur, in his land-reform directive of December 13, 1945, ordered the Japanese government 'to take measures that those who till the soil of Japan shall have a more equal opportunity to enjoy the fruits of their labor,' not as an end in itself but in order to 'remove economic obstacles to the revival and strengthening of democratic tendencies, establish respect for the dignity of man, and destroy the economic bondage which has enslaved the Japanese farmer to centuries of feudal oppression.'"^{*}

UPON Ladejinsky was placed the responsibility for implementing this directive. In collaboration with leading Japanese agricultural economists, he wrote the provisions of the Special Measure for the Establishment of Owner-Farmers (Land Reform Law) and Agricultural Adjustment Law of 1946. The reform provided for the purchase by the Japanese government of approximately 5,000,000 acres, or about 80 per cent of the farmlands under tenant cultivation, for subsequent resale to the tenants, the transfer to be accomplished within two years.

Although the landlords were compensated for the land they lost, they suffered heavily as a result of the currency inflation that followed adoption of the land reform program,

^{*}"The Promise of Agrarian Reform in Japan," by William M. Gilmartin and W. I. Ladejinsky, *Foreign Affairs*, October-January, 1947-48.

and the tenants got a windfall. It was high time. For centuries it had been the Japanese peasants who had paid the bills for the civil and foreign wars conducted by the Japanese landlords, militarists, and nobles, and also the huge bill for Japan's industrialization during the 19th and 20th centuries. Now, at last, the yoke was being lifted from their necks, and in every province Japanese peasants fingered their deeds with incredulous joy.

The Japanese Communists and the Russians were rather less joyful. In another article,* published a year later, Ladejinsky told why. From the beginning of the occupation General Derevyanko, the Soviet representative to the Four Power Council for Japan, had demagogically demanded the immediate expropriation of the land at no cost to anybody except the landlord, taunting his American colleagues on the Council with their slowness in launching agrarian reform. In the villages Communist party agents echoed this line, demanding immediate collectivization on the Russian model.

In the Japanese Diet, the landlords and their allies among the reactionary parties made common cause with the Communists in denouncing SCAP's program. If it became law, they warned, the Japanese peasant would stand helpless and alone without a friend against the calamities of nature and the exactions of government, the annual festivals would lack for patrons, and the temples would fall to ruins. But everywhere the peasants were equally emphatic in rejecting the "protection" of their former masters and the tutelage of their Communist "friends," whose next move, as in Russia and Eastern Europe, would have been to rob them of their newly acquired land and tie them down like serfs on state farms.

The Japanese Communists knew well whom to blame for their discomfiture and defeat, the worst they had suffered during the occupation and one which largely de-

stroyed their influence in the Japanese villages. Both the Russian and the Japanese Communist press raged continuously against MacArthur and his agrarian advisers. (It was in this period that Ladejinsky stopped writing his sisters in Russia lest his letters endanger them.)

By the beginning of 1947, the success of Ladejinsky's program was so well established that General MacArthur wrote a letter, on January 16, to the Department of Agriculture stating that he had performed "outstanding services in the land reform program of Japan." Elsewhere MacArthur has declared that the land reform program "did more to cut the ground from under the Japanese Communists than any other measure taken during the occupation." By this time, from Tokyo to Delhi, Ladejinsky's name had become synonymous with land reform. In the words of Gove Hambidge, FAO's director of information, he was "the most sought-after land authority in Asia—it is necessary to ration his services." Between 1947 and 1950, as Chief of the Far Eastern Division of the USDA's office of Foreign Agricultural Relations, Ladejinsky made trips to China in an effort to institute land reforms in what was left of Chiang Kai-shek's China, to India, and to Formosa, where he succeeded in reducing rents from 70 per cent of the crop to 37.5 per cent.

After the land reform program was solidly established in Japan, the USDA loaned Ladejinsky to the State Department in 1950 to try to expand the Japanese market for American agricultural products (precisely the task Secretary Benson considers the major responsibility of the agricultural attachés now under his jurisdiction). Within a short time Ladejinsky was proving that he was no less gifted as a diplomat and negotiator than as a land reformer. As a result, sales of American agricultural products to Japan rose steadily to a peak of nearly \$480,000,000 in 1954—25 per cent of the total export sales of American agricultural products in that year. No European country has ever approached that figure. The files of the Department are full of telegrams from

*"Japanese Communists Lose a Battle," by Darrell Berrigan and W. I. Ladejinsky, *Saturday Evening Post*, June 8, 1949.

American food-exporters applauding Ladejinsky's efforts.

It is unlikely that subsequent investigation will add much to the foregoing record of what happened to Wolf Ladejinsky under the Eisenhower security program. How and why it happened are harder matters to determine. Ladejinsky himself was still puzzled when he left for Vietnam, while Secretary Benson's and his aides' early garrulity had turned into an unhappy official silence. One is reduced, therefore, to weighing various speculative alternatives:

(1) Was anti-Semitism a factor in Ladejinsky's dismissal?

Ladejinsky himself is disposed to doubt this. Xenophobia, perhaps—even the kind of Midwestern xenophobia that finds the foreignness of a Russian Jew a shade more foreign and “un-American” than most other kinds of foreignness. As far back as 1945, when Ladejinsky was loaned to General MacArthur, Representative Carl Curtis of Nebraska complained that “a foreigner is getting a job that a Middle Western dirt farmer could do better.” But neither at that time nor subsequently was any direct reference made to Ladejinsky's Jewishness. On this question Ladejinsky says: “Never in my entire career in America, either at the university, in the United States Department of Agriculture, in the army, or in the State Department, have I encountered the slightest evidence of discrimination because of my ‘race.’”

(2) If we assume, then, that anti-Semitism was a negligible factor in Ladejinsky's dismissal, what about Secretary Benson's assertion that he lacked “technical qualifications” for the job? On this point there is some interesting evidence. On August 8, 1954, when the prospective transfer from State to Agriculture came up for discussion, the administrator of the Office of Foreign Agricultural Affairs, W. G. Lodwick, wrote Ladejinsky: “We hope you will decide to join the staff of the Department of Agriculture and will appreciate your advising of your wishes regarding your transfer as soon as

possible.” On October 7, Ladejinsky learned from the acting assistant administrator of the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations that there had been requests for his services from the State Department and Foreign Operations Administration (the National Security Council had decided land reform in Southern Vietnam was needed to keep the country out of Communist hands), but that Secretary Benson had written FOA Administrator Harold Stassen that Ladejinsky could not be released. “You are one of the key men,” wrote the acting assistant administrator, “in the very important negotiations with Japan on agricultural commodities.”

A week later, on October 15, FAR Administrator Lodwick wrote: “. . . concerning the land reform conference in Bangkok, every one and his big brother has been calling, writing and coming in here to tell us that if you don't go to this conference not only that part of the world but the whole universe will collapse. . . . But . . . to put it bluntly, we cannot spare you at this time.”

Clearly Ladejinsky's immediate superiors, who were in the best position to judge his competence, considered him the best man for the job, and were eager to have him accept it.

(3) One is forced, therefore, to suspect something other than doubt of Ladejinsky's technical qualifications. For one thing, there was an acute need of good jobs with which to reward the administration's political supporters, and the post of agricultural attaché to the Tokyo Embassy had become a very good job indeed—second in rank only to the ambassador; under the 1954 law giving Agriculture jurisdiction over agricultural attachés, these positions were taken out of civil service and reclassified in new “super” grades running as high, in major embassies like Tokyo, as \$15,000 a year.

(4) There is also the possibility, suggested by Senator Humphrey, that Ladejinsky's dismissal signified a certain coolness toward the idea of land reform abroad on the part of the administration's farm supporters. That Secretary Benson himself may have shared this coolness is suggested by his statement at

a press conference that he "wouldn't want to see Ladejinsky's program adopted in this country." Washington commentators have noted that in off-the-record interviews some of Secretary Benson's aides have branded the Japanese land distribution as "socialistic." With some reason, the administration's Democratic opponents have said that if American foreign policy turns against land reform, the Communists will have a propaganda weapon they can use with devastating effect in Asia and elsewhere.

(5) There remains the security issue, which Secretary Benson undoubtedly took seriously, however much he may have been influenced by other considerations. Here the most charitable explanation would be that the Secretary was let down by a brash, inexperienced, and to some degree prejudiced staff. This charge is implicit in the statement of former Senator Harry P. Cain, a member of the Subversive Activities Control Board, who declared that "He [Ladejinsky] became unwillingly a *cause célèbre* because some eager beavers and Johnny-come-latelies, in our necessary effort to keep America strong, couldn't take the time to talk to him or relate the points in question to twenty years of a man's private and public life."

Senator Cain's references were scarcely opaque. Mr. Benson's executive assistant, with no previous experience in government, took over his responsibilities on December 1. John G. Cassity, Agriculture's Security Officer, is a wartime intelligence officer from Secretary Benson's home state of Utah; he had held his post exactly ninety days when he decided the Ladejinsky case. It is reported that he was appointed over the protests of the Civil Service Commission.

EVEN the administration supporters admitted that the Ladejinsky case revealed blatant procedural defects in the security system, and in March, Attorney General Brownell announced a seven-point program designed to remedy them. These reforms, as approved by the President, provide that the top legal officer in each department or agency

be consulted on the drafting of charges against an accused employee; that a statement of the charges be given to the employee at the time of notice of suspension; and that no officials under the level of an Assistant Secretary are empowered to order suspensions. It is recommended, but not ordered, that personal interviews be accorded employees against whom derogatory information has been received. Agency heads are required to consult each other when one official makes an adverse security evaluation of a person who has been cleared by another agency. In all cases where national security would not be jeopardized, the accused employee may cross-examine witnesses who have given adverse information against him.

But all this overlooks one of the chief lessons of the Ladejinsky case—the danger of politicalizing the administrative personnel of the security system. Obviously these jobs should be reserved for trained career people. The Attorney General's recommendations also by-pass the demand, voiced by the administration's critics, for substantive changes in the security program, including restoration of the interdepartmental appeal board that was abolished under the Eisenhower security program. As this is being written, the need for revising the security system is being explored by two Congressional committees. One is a subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations, which is considering Senator Humphrey's bill to establish a bipartisan Commission on Government Security. The other is the Senate Committee on the Post Office and Civil Service, headed by Senator Olin D. Johnston.

Meanwhile, in Vietnam, the central figure of the *cause célèbre* is struggling with the difficult tasks of land reform for which he was asked, and needed, nearly a year ago. Perhaps his help in saving Vietnam from Communism comes too late. But it is not too late to prevent other devoted public servants from being ground between the upper and nether millstones of shoddy party politics and patronage, and a defective, clumsily administered security system.